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ABSTRACT

A discussion of student competence focuses on two types of competence required of students: the integration of academic content and interactional form (e.g., turn-taking, producing ordered and coherent discourse, making coherent topical ties), and the integration of teacher and student agendas, examining what happens when students' display of academic content is not integrated with appropriate interactional form. It is observed that lack of integration undermines classroom social interaction and can lead to negative teacher evaluations of students. It is proposed that students and teachers come to the classroom with different agendas, objectives and programs they would like to see met, and students and teachers coordinate procedures to accomplish their respective objectives, allowing multiple activities to coexist in the classroom. It is argued that recognition of the existence of interactional competence as part of the implicit, tacit background of social knowledge students must learn as they learn academic knowledge is important, and that this competence is often important in teachers' and others' evaluations of student performance. Prevailing theories of socialization are criticized from the perspective that socialization is a two-way street, with students and teachers influencing each others' behavior in the classroom environment. (Author/MSE)

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THE COMPETENT STUDENT

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THE COMPETENT STUDENT

Hugh Mehan

Conceptions of Culture

Culture has been productively talked about as the knowledge or skills that are necessary for membership in a society or community. An early, representative statement of this position was provided by Tylor (1871:1): "Culture or civilization, taken in its widest ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

Cultural Knowledge. This definition of culture was meant to distinguish those aspects of the totality of human experience that is social and transmitted by symbolic means from those aspects that are biological and transmitted by generic means. This "omnibus" conception of culture has been constrained somewhat recently. On one occasion Goodenough (1964:36) wrote: "As I see it, a society's culture consists of whatever one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they may accept for themselves." More recently he said: "The culture of any society is made up of the concepts, beliefs, and principles of action and organization that an ethnographer has found he could attribute successfully to the members of society in the context of his dealings with them" (Goodenough 1976:3). "His competence is indicated by his ability to interact effectively in its terms with others who are already competent." (Ibid.:4)

Linguistic Knowledge. These formulations define culture in terms of competence, i.e., requisites for effective participation in a community. These anthropological conceptions of culture as competence have been recapitulated in linguistics, where the structure and function of language has been described in terms of "linguistic competence." Chomsky (1965) characterized linguistic competence as the skills and abilities that a speaker must have in order to produce and understand phonologically, grammatically, and semantically correct sentences. He proposed a generative model of linguistic skills in which a small number of rules are responsible for the production of a large finite number of well-formed sentences.

Hymes (1974) and other socio-linguists[1] (Ervin-Tripp, 1972; Gumperz, 1971; Labov, 1972; Shuy et al. 1967), while tacitly accepting Chomsky's generative notion, have challenged grammatically based conceptions of competence for being too narrow. Linguistic competence as defined by Chomsky accounts for the production of the possible sentences in a language, but it does not account for the occasions when sentences are to be used. An actual speaker-hearer of a language equipped with only that version of linguistic knowledge would be a social incompetent. That person might be observed uttering sentences continually, and in a random order. That person would not know when to speak, when not to speak, what to say, with whom, in what way.

Communication involves the production of socially acceptable speech, which includes, but is not limited to the production of grammatically correct sentences. Therefore, sociolinguistics maintains that a theory of language (and therefore, of competence) must account for language use in discourse and social contexts, not only the production of well formed sentences. Sociolinguistics broadens the conception of comptence so that the "formal" aspects of language (the knowledge of phonology, syntax, and semantics involved in the production of well formed sentences) are encompassed by the "functional" aspects of language. The functional aspects of language concern effective language use in different social situations. It includes the speaker-hearers' ability to accomplish tasks with language, the ability to communicate and interpret intentions, knowledge of the functions that language can serve, the strategies of language that can be used to accomplish each function, and knowledge of the constraints that social situations impose on repertoire selection. Hymes has coined the term "communicative competence" to refer to the capacity to acquire and use language appropriately in different social situations. It is recommended as a more encompassing formulation of a speaker-hearer's knowledge of language than Chomsky's conception of formal linguistic competence.

Social Knowledge. These anthropological and linguistic conceptions of competence have been paralleled by development in phenomenologically influenced sociology, most notably Schutz (1962), Garfinkel (1967), and Cicourel (1973). Schutz (1962) equipped his model of the social actor with a "stock of social knowledge." According to Schutz, social knowledge is "what everybody knows" about the social world in which they live. It is the

fundamental, requisite, background information that people must know and use in order to function socially. Schutz (1962:3-7) has said that all action taken in the natural attitude of everyday life is based on a set of previous experiences with the world. This socially accumulated stock of knowledge acts as a frame of reference to inform action to be taken at the present time.

Included in this stock of knowlege is the fact that the world is not private, but from the outset, is intersubjective. It is intersubjective because we live in it as people among people, bound to each other through common influence and work, understanding others, and being understood by them. Furthermore, because in the natural attitude, people take it for granted that others exist and that objects of the world are knowable by them, a "reciprocity of perspectives" is included in the stock of social knowledge. The reciprocity of perspectives does the work of sustaining the assumption that each of us would have the same experiences if we were to change places, had the same biography, perspective, and purposes at hand.

Accounts of the manner in which members of society use their stock of social knowledge have benefitted from a heuristic application of the linguistic metaphor of a generative rule. The linguist says that the speaker-hearer does not select a sentence from a ready-made supply; rather, a small set of rules combine to produce a large number of novel sentences. Likewise, all members of society do not have the entire substantive history of their culture welled up, the necessary aspects of which spill out during interactional encounters like water from a spout when the handle is pumped. Instead, the social actor is said to employ "interpretive procedures" (Cicourel 1973) to cast objects, the appearance of the situation, and the behavior of others into a typically known, and taken-for-granted form, which facilitates interaction in the social world.

Competence for interaction. Distilling these views, we obtain a conception of competence as the requisite skills, abilities, and knowledge necessary for participation in a given community. However, we must be on guard here against an overly mentalistic and individualistic conception of competence.

The concepts of cultural, linguistic, and social knowledge reviewed above have a distinctively cognitive orientation. This cognitive orientation can lead unwittingly to the position that competence is only things in people's heads. Competence for participation in interaction is not a

subjectivistic consideration. It is a social consideration. Interactional competence is not to be equated with underlying abilities, or reduced to the level of an individual person. As Garfinkel (1963) once said: "there is no reason to look under the skull, since there is nothing of interest to be found there but brains."

People must display what they know. The meaningfulness of behavioral displays is established by the interpretations of others. This is not to say that the production and interpretation of behavioral displays are separate and distinct entities. Production and interpretation inform one another. The interpretation of a behavioral display in the present informs the production of behavior in the future, just as the production of present displays informs subsequent interpretations (cf. Mead, 1954:69).

Competence, then, is assembled by people in concert with each other. Therefore, we must look to social situations, socially assembled situations, not individual persons as the units of analysis appropriate for the interactional display of interactional competence. In fact, a description of what people must know-to-do in order to act in a manner that is acceptable to each other will be distorted if it is conducted independently of the social circumstances in which that knowledge is to be displayed.

Socialization in the classroom community. "Socialization" denotes the process by which culture is transmitted from one generation to the next. When societies have been viewed in terms of a collection of statuses, socialization has become the transmission of role behavior. Dollard (1935) described the socialization process in these terms, as "an account of how a new person is added to the group and becomes an adult capable of meeting the traditional expectations of his society not person of his sex and age." When the study of culture has been influenced by psycho-analytic theory, socialization research has concentrated on the development of personality through the life history. Weaning, toilet training, the control of sex, dependence and aggression, and other aspects of infancy and child rearing characterize studies of socialization from the combined viewpoint of psychoanalysis and cultural anthropology (e.g. Dubois and Kardiner, 1945).

When culture is viewed as competent membership, a different view of socialization emerges. Socialization becomes the interactional and symbolic process involved in the transmission and acquisition of cultural knowledge. It is the process by which people become competent members of their community,

concerned with the development of the fundamental human attributes of speech, social communication, thought, self reflection, and consciousness (Richards, 1974).

The elementary school classroom is a place where socialization occurs. Classrooms are often described in academic terms: "They are places where people meet for the purposes of giving and receiving instruction" (Waller, 1932:8). Students go to school in order to learn to read, write, and compute, master the content of such subjects as history, social studies, and science.

Instruction is also provided in dominant cultural values and conventional morality. "No community or nation really wants, nor can it afford to have its educators really educate, for this would be subversive to the status quo; it wants its youth socialized" (Parsons, 1959). Dreeben (1968), for example, points out that American classrooms instruct students that working independently, achieving the highest level of success possible, and applying universalistic criteria are cultural values. Competition could easily be added to that list. Parsons (1959) says in the socialization role, the teacher is responsible for emancipating children from their primary emotional attachment to the family, instilling achievement as the mode of differentiation among people, promoting universalistic (societal) rather than particularistic (familial) norms and values, motivating and training for performance in roles that are beneficial to society, and encouraging conformance to the expectations of others as a technique of social control.

The classroom is "socializing" in another sense, and it is in this sense that I will be concerned with in this paper. If one is careful to heed Brice-Heath's (1979) warning and not over-extend the metaphor, it is heuristic to think of a classroom as a small community:

> Folklore and myth, tradition, taboo, magic rites, ceremonials of all sorts, collective representations, participation mystique, all abound in the front yard of every school, and occasionally they creep upstairs and are incorporated into the more formal portions of school life.
>
> There are, in the school, complex rituals of personal relationships, a set of folkways, mores, and irrational sanctions, a moral code based upon them. There are games, which are sublimated wars, teams, and an elaborate set of ceremonies concerning them. There are traditions, and traditionalists waging their world-old battle against innovators. There are laws, and there is the problem of enforcing them. There is Sittlichkeit. There are specialized societies

> with a rigid structure and a limited membership. There are no reproductive groups, but there are customs regulating the relations of the sexes. All these things make up a world that is different from the world of adults. It is this separate culture of the young, having its locus in the school. (Waller, 1932).

This is not to say that the school and its classroom sub-units are entirely autonomous configurations. Like other communities, the classroom community is influenced by the larger society of which it is a part. Administrative policy concerning curriculum content, textbooks, teaching, and testing, established by school boards and state departments of education (i.e., at a bureaucratic level above the classroom) impinge upon educational practice in the classroom. Likewise, the demands of the economy for a technically trained, literate, and compliant labor force make the classroom responsive to external forces. Furthermore, parents, having been to school themselves, voice opinions about what and how their children should be taught.

While the existence of such forces shows that the school is related to and to some extent dependent upon the society surrounding it, there is not the one to one correspondence between the organization of society and the organization of the classroom that has been proposed by some:

> The educational system... is best understood as an institution which serves to perpetuate the social relationships of economic life through which these patterns are set, by facilitating a smooth integration of youth into the labor force. This role takes a variety of forms. Schools legitimate inequality through the ostensibly meritocratic manner by which they reward and promote students, and allocate them to distinct positions in the occupational hierarchy....
>
> The educational system operates in this manner not so much through the conscious intentions of teachers and administrators in their day-to-day activities, but through a close correspondence between the social relationships which govern personal interaction in the work place and the social relationships of the educational system. Specifically, the relationships of authority and control between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, students and students, and students and their work replicate the hierarchical division of labor which dominates the work place (Bowles and Gintes, 1976:11-12).

Such statements are written from the stance that capitalism, and not education, human nature, or bureaucracy, is the limiting force. By presupposing that the structure of the work force is recapitulated in the structure of

the classroom, they carry the implication that there is no need to look at educational practice in the classroom in order to understand the role of education in society.

I concur with Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bernstein (1973), M.F.D. Young (1971), and others[2] who say that the structuring of knowledge and symbols in education is intimately related to the principles and practices of social and cultural control in our society. As a result, what happens inside schools at a cultural level must be understood if we are to understand what happens outside school at an economic level.

As in other communities nested within a larger society, there are preferred patterns of behavior proscribed for members of the classroom community. Some of these patterns of behavior are carried over from the general society. Others are generated within the organization. Both the general and locally generated patterns of behaviors are guided by rules or norms. These rules do not impose constraints on action automatically. They are established by convention (Lewis, 1969), which means they are tacitly agreed upon, cooperatively maintained, and/or just acquired by the members of the classroom community.

The Competent Student I: The Integration of Interactional Form and Academic Content

What do students need to know and do in order to be competent members of the classroom community? What knowledge must students display to be judged successful in the eyes of other members of the classroom community, notably the teacher?

Research being conducted on the social organization of the classroom[3] is showing that competent membership in the classroom community involves matters of interactional form as well as academic content. To participate effectively in the classroom, students must indeed master academic subject matter. In addition to accumulating this stock of academic knowledge, students must also learn that there are interactionally appropriate ways to cast their academic knowledge. Learning that certain ways of talking and acting are appropriate on some occasions and not others, learning when, where, and with whom certain kinds of behavior can occur, are some of the

essential constituents of the stock of social knowledge relevant for effective participation in the classroom community.

The necessity for the integration of interactional form and academic content is readily apparant in elementary school classroom lessons. Although it is incumbent upon students to display what they know during lessons, they must also know how to display what they know. While students are expected to provide substantively correct academic content during lessons, they must be able to provide this information in the appropriate form.

There are a number of items on the agenda of an elementary school teacher at any given moment. Many of these are concerned with academic matters, such as improving students' basic skills, increasing their substantive knowledge, and developing their analytic skills. Teachers also have more practical concerns. They want their students to be well mannered and disciplined. This concern for order is not necessarily an end in itself; it is often a utilitarian stance, adopted so that students have equal opportunities for expression and development.

This agenda is recapitulated in the microcosm of any lesson. In most lessons, teachers want to accomplish something in a specific period of time. The practical problem of order also reappears, as teachers want lessons to proceed in an orderly way.

This agenda also informs the moment-to-moment organization of classroom lessons. Classroom lessons have been described as an unfolding series of "initiation-reply-evaluation sequences" (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Griffin and Humphrey, 1978; Mehan, 1979). Most of these sequences are initiated by the teacher, and have been classified under the headings of "elicitations," "directives," and informatives.' Elicitations are often "known information" questions. They elicit information from students about teacher specified topics. Directives instruct students to take procedural actions, such as sharpening pencils, or rearranging chairs. Informatives pass on information to students, especially in a lecture format.

Each of these initiation acts not only specifies an action to be taken; it also identifies the person who is to take the action. That is, as a teacher initiates a sequence of interaction, (s)he simultaneously allocates turns to the students. Under normal classroom circumstances, turns are allocated to students in three ways: an Individaul Nomination, an Invitation to Bid, and an Invitation to Reply turn-allocation procedure.

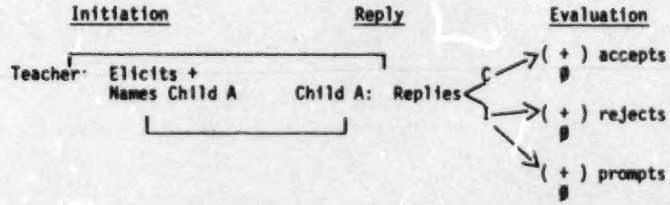
When academic content and interactional form are integrated, classroom discourse proceeds smoothly. This integration of form and content is displayed in the following examples:

Initiation	Reply	Evaluation
8:5 T: ...where were you born Prenda?	P: San Diego	T: You were born in San Diego, alright

The context surrounding this teacher-student exchange is a lesson about student's places of birth. Students came to school with information about family histories. At a certain point in the lesson, the teacher asked each student in turn where they were born. Here we have the teacher eliciting this information from Prenda. In so doing, the floor is allocated to Prenda by the Individual Nomination procedure. That allocation gives her the right to the floor for the next reply frame. Her subsequent reply displays both correct academic content and appropriate interactional form (as marked by the teacher's treatment of Prenda's reply).

The "normal form" of the individual nomination procedure is summarized in Figure 1:

Figure 1
The Individual Nomination Turn Allocation Procedure



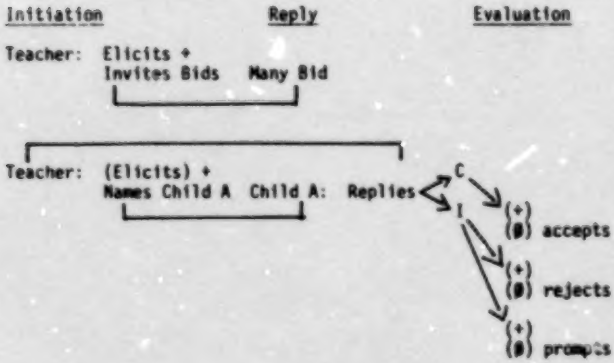
Teachers do not always nominate students by name to reply to questions. Students can be invited to bid for the floor as part of an elicitation act:

Initiation	Reply	Evaluation
4:70 T: Raise you hand if you know where Leola's house would go on this map.	Many: (Raise hands)	
4:71 T: Edward, where do you think Leola's house would go? Come, come and see and we'll see if any of the other people would agree with you.	E: (Points to map)	T: Edward says over here.

This exchange is extracted from a lesson in which places that students had visited in walks around the school yard were located on a map hung on the classroom wall. Here, the teacher invites those students who think they know the answer to the teacher's question to bid for the floor ("raise your hand if..."). The teacher then selected Edward from among the group of students that bid. The reply by the student was accepted by the teacher, thus indicating that the student provided correct academic information in accordance with classroom turn-allocation procedures. Note that this turn-taking procedure goes across two teacher-student exchanges. During the first exchange, the teacher invites the pupils to bid. During the second exchange, the teacher nominates the pupils, and they reply. The teacher then evaluates the form and content of the student's reply.

The "invitation to bid" turn allocation procedure, which transverses two turns, is summarized in Figure 2:

Figure 2
The Invitation to Bid Turn Allocation Procedure



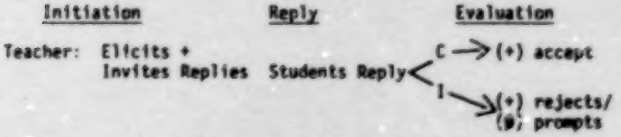
A third allocation procedure enables students to state what they know directly. When this "invitation to reply" procedure is in use, students reply, often in unison, without being named or obtaining the floor by bidding

Initiation	Reply	Evaluation
5:7 T: Let's hear some of the rest of you	SS: The map	T: The map. O.K.
5:23 T: (Points to the first line of story)	T & SS: (in unison). This is a map	T: All right
5:24 T: Let's try it again	All: This is a map	T: Good

These elicitations explicitly invite students to answer in unison, producing a chorus of replies.

Figure 3

The Invitation to Reply Turn Allocation Procedure



The Separation of Form and Content

In short, teacher-student interaction proceeds smoothly when the display of academic content is integrated with appropriate interactional form. However, not all interaction in classroom lessons conforms to this normative ideal. Displays of academic knowledge are not always synchronized with procedures for their display.

The separation of interactional form and academic content unravels the fabric of social interaction in the classroom community. It can also lead to negative evaluations of students by the teacher. This is as much the case for the student who provides correct academic content without appropriate interactional form, as it is for the student who conforms to classroom rules for participating in classroom conversation without an accompanying display of academic knowledge.

Content without form. The student who supplies correct academic information, but does not use appropriate turn-taking procedures to provide it typifies the case of content without form. The following are examples:

Initiation	Reply	Evaluation
3:15 T: Now, what can you think, can you think of something to eat?	Many: Snakes Many: (raise hands) snakes	T: Wait a minute, wait a minute T: Wait a minute, raise your hand. Raise your hand. Give people a chance to think

Initiation	Reply	Evaluation
4:93 T: Um, who can think of some words (draws on board)	Many: Jelly Jerome	T: Martin, raise your hand to give other people a chance to think. That's why I want you to raise your hand to give other people a chance to think

These students knew the correct answers to the teacher's questions, but they did not employ the correct procedures for gaining success to the floor. The teacher had invited students to bid for the floor. However, the students replied directly. Consequentially, their actions were negatively evaluated by the teacher.

Form without content. Once students have gained access to the floor, they must know what to do with it. The student who displays mastery of the procedures for gaining access to the floor, but does not have simultaneous command over academic information typifies the case of form without content. The following is an example:

Initiation	Reply	Evaluation
4:46	Jeannie: (raises hand)	
4:47 T: Jeannie	Jeannie: (pause) I had it and I lost it	T: Uh, ya

It appears in this case that the student knew that hand raising was an important aspect of classroom participation, but she did not display evidence that supplying information is an integral component of that participation structure.

A similar lack of congruence between the form and content of classroom interaction occurs when students conform to classroom procedures, but do not synchronize their actions with those of the teacher. The following is an example:

Initiation	Reply	Evaluation
7:1 T: Um, now, uh, let me ask you about something about lunch. You people have been doing a very good job as I said yesterday, about walking to the cafeteria and back without cutting.	Jeannie: (raises hand) Many: Uh huh (yes)	
7:2 T: That part's been ok, right Prenda.	Prenda: Yeah	

Initiation	Reply	Evaluation
Chart continues...		
7:3 T: We're still not so good about coming back into the room. Um, but the, but the cutting isn't the no cutting is really worked well.	Jeannie: (raises hand) Jeannie: (raises hand)	
7:4 T: Now let me ask you something about in the cafeteria. Somebody has to take your trays and empty them, and put them//	//Jeannie: (raises hand) Jeannie: (lowers hand)	T: Wait a minute, let me finish, let me ask the question.

This dialogue took place at the opening of a lesson designed to solve a problem concerning the disposal of lunch trays in the cafeteria after lunch. Jeannie displays considerable knowledge of classroom turn-taking procedures; she bid for the floor at least three times in this brief sequence. Unfortunately, her bids for the floor did not appear in an appropriate slot for such behavior. A bid for the floor is supposed to occur after a question has been asked. Jeannie's bids occured in the pauses within the teacher's soliloquoy, not in the juncture after her question. The teacher reacted negatively to the lack of synchrony between a bid for the floor and the completion of an initiation.

There are practical consequences for students who do not unite form and content. The student who provides academically correct content without casting it in the appropriate interactional form is inviting negative sanction. A history of such behavior can lead a student down a less satisfactory educational career path. The student who attends to form without an equivalent concern for content, loses opportunities to express knowledge. A history of lost opportunities can lead a teacher to believe that a student

in unattentive, unexpressive, and the like, because it is in the moment-to-moment give and take of classroom interaction that teacher's expectations are built up and worked out.

Summary

In sum, competent membership in the classroom community involves interactional work in the display of academic knowledge. The synchronization of students' replies with teachers' initiations together with the integration of interactional form with academic content are constituent features of participation in the classroom community. The absence of behavior along either the interactional or the academic dimension, regardless of the presence of behavior along the other, disrupts the flow of classroom interaction; this disruption has potential practical consequences for students.

When the teacher initiates a round of questioning, students are expected to produce academically correct replies in ways that are consistent with the normative expectations associated with the turn allocation procedures operating in the classroom at the moment. This synchrony is achieved moment-to-moment by students deploying their stock of social and academic knowledge in constantly changing classroom circumstances.

These interrelationships between academic content and interactional forms are depicted in figure 4:

Figure 4
The Interrelationships Between Academic Content and Interactional Form

Academic Content	Interactional Form	
+	+	Effective participation; the integration of form and content
+	-	Academically correct but interactionally inappropriate interaction; content without form
-	+	form without content; interactionally appropriate behavior but academically incorrect content
-	-	Non-participation

The Competent Student 2: The Integration of Teacher and Student Agendas

To this point, the description of membership in the classroom community has been presented from the point of view of the classroom teacher who has an academic agenda with a number of objectives to reach. However heuristic for describing the organization of classroom events, being confined to that point of view can unwittingly paint an incomplete picture of students' life in classrooms. Looking at classroom lessons from only the point of view of the teacher can leave the impression that students do nothing but passively fit into the teacher's scheme of things (Dunkin and Biddle, 1974; Dreeben, 1968). Furthermore, this perspective can imply that all discontinuities between interactional form and academic content are "errors" on the part of the student, stemming from incompetent participation in the structure of classroom discourse.

Students, like teachers, have objectives that they would like to meet during the course of a given classroom event, a school day, a school year. And, like teachers, students employ others and their surroundings as contexts for achieving these objectives. The simultaneous presence of students' and teachers' agendas suggests that the classroom be viewed as a social activity in which teachers and students mutually influence each other and collaboratively assemble its social order.

The Setting

The subtle ways in which students integrate contributions to a teacher's agenda with the assembly of their own agendas will be the focus of the following discussion. The basis of the discussion will be the activities that occurred during one particular "circle on the rug" in an ethnically mixed, cross-age classroom, taught by Courtney B. Cazden and La Donna Coles in 1974-75. The classroom was organized into "learning centers" in the Spring of the year. The first hour of the day was designated "choosing time." The students were free to choose an academic activity that the teachers had set up in different learning centers. Following "choosing time," the teachers and students assembled as a group "on the rug." Here, the teachers invited the students to share their work, read stories in Spanish and English, and listen to announcements of daily work schedules. Announcements of any changes in classroom procedures were also made during this time. After "the circle," the students were divided into small math and reading groups. Some groups

started working alone, while others started with the teachers. At designated times, the groups rotated between self and teacher-directed work. Recess and another cycle of small group work completed the morning.[4]

A wireless microphone was placed on the back of a different student in the classroom for an hour each morning. The resulting "hour in the life" videotapes provide a view of life in the classroom that incorporates both the students' and the teachers' perspectives as they participated in these diverse activities.

Methodological Note

Official teacher-led activities and less official but equally organized student-student activity occur simultaneously during these events. This multiple, simultaneous activity makes the presentation of materials difficult. The multiple foci of action makes it difficult to segment events in the manner that Erickson and his colleagues and McDermott have employed so successfully on events that have a single focus. The overlapping realms of activity, and the amount of important non-verbal behavior also operate against presenting materials in the transcript form used to depict teacher-directed activities (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Shuy and Griffin, 1978; Mehan, et al 1976, Mehan, 1979). As a consequence I have resorted to a running account of the unfolding action, with quotes from the videotape included occassionally, and interpretations set off from descriptions of behavior.

Call to the Circle

At the end of "choosing time," the teacher took the chart which listed classroom jobs and students assigned to them from its place on the wall, and propped it up on an easel in the rug area. The teacher then instructed the children to finish their work, clean up, and assemble on the rug.

As the teacher was calling students to the circle, Carolyn (the student with the microphone for the day) and Leola went to the clothes closet. Rummaging in her purse, Carolyn found some sun flower seeds: "Oh, wow, I got some salty seeds in my purse. Some for Leola... Leola! (calling, as Leola had left the area. I got some salty seeds for you in my purse." Leola: "Me?" Carolyn: "If you play with me, if you play with me, if you play with me." Leola: "I play, I play with you."

This exchange, which took place as Leola and Carolyn made their way from the closet area to the rug, indicates that Carolyn has an objective to reach.

She wants Leola to play with her, and seems to be using positive reinforcement as a means to reach this goal.

As the teacher arranges some materials, the students find places to sit on the rug facing the teacher. Leola and Carolyn sit together next to Denise and Regina. While the teacher adjusts the seating arrangements of some of the students on the other side of the circle, Denise, Carolyn, and Leola are intently engaged in coversation. Denise has brought some money she received for her birthday to school. She passes the money to Carolyn, who in turn passes some to Leola. At one point, Carolyn has all five of Denise's new nickels, which she redistributes so that she has three, Denise and Leola have one each.

This building of social cohesion, which utilizes the appropriation and redistribution of wealth, takes place at the same time the teacher is organizing the beginning of the circle, yet it occurs independently of it. Like the distribution of seeds above, this activity indicates that students have agendas, which can co-exist with those of the teacher.

The Distribution of Jobs

After asking Denise to help Wallace clean up their work, the teacher reenacted a regular classroom ritual--the distribution of classroom jobs. Assignments like maintaining the classroom library, updating the calendar and taking care of recreational equipment, were announced, and students bid for these assignments at the circle each Monday morning.

The teacher's continual concern that academic content be cast in an appropriate interactional form is evident as she initiates this phase of the circle: "Um, Rodolpho has been waiting. Just take it easy Edward. Rodolpho, what job do you want?" A number of students had been eagerly expressing interest in obtaining jobs; but, Rodolpho had been employing approved classroom procedures--raising his hand. His efforts were rewarded with the first choice of a job.

The teacher then asked Ysidro for his coice of jobs. While that exchange between teacher and student transpires, Carolyn, Leola, and Denise are engaged in a conversation of their own. This time, it concerns a strategy to best obtain a job. First, Denise suggests that Carolyn, Leola, and her (but not Felicia) form a coalition to bid for a job. That suggestion is overridden by Carolyn, who insists that only Leola and her work together.

In the meantime, the teacher assigns jobs to Edward and Jeannie. There is an interesting variation in the procedure of assigning jobs in the exchange that occurs with Jeannie. She has chosen the calendar job, but, because it is the first school day of a new month, the calendar page needs to be turned over. The teacher asks Jeannie to leave the circle and do that. Here we have an example of the teacher employing a student to facilitate the accomplishment of an item on her agenda. Later in the circle we will see Carolyn use a version of this strategy to advantage while accomplishing an item on her agenda.

While Jeannie is running the teacher's errand, the teacher asks students about the day's date. Someone announces that it is Denise's birthday. While the teacher is asking Denise about the day's date, she discovers that money is in circulation among the group of girls. She asks Denise: "Where does that money go?" Denise replies: "In my pocket," as Carolyn choruses: "in her pocket." The teacher reinforces these suggestions: "Okay, put it away, and button up your pocket so it doesn't come out."

That bout of social control concluded, the teacher scans the group for more job bidders. Leola advocates for her friend Denise by calling out her name repeatedly. The teacher in fact chooses Denise as next bidder, and in the process, formulates a new classroom rule: "Denise, what job do you want? Birthday girl gets to pick." While Denise raises up on her knees to scan the remaining list of jobs, Carolyn and Leola continue to make plans for their job acquisition. Carolyn whispers to Leola: "Get the library with me, alright?" Denise, slow to make her pick, is encouraged by the teacher. Meanwhile, a number of students initiated activities are inserted into the conversational space opened by Denise's contemplation of her prospects. First, Leola tries to play off the teacher's new rule. She raises her hand and says (laughingly): "It's my birthday." The teacher carries that advance, but does not extend the birthday rule to Martha: "Martha, you can pick next 'cuz its gonna be your birthday on Wednesday." Next, a number of students shout out bids. The teacher chastises them, reminding them of the classroom turn-taking rule of not talking while it is another's turn. Once again, the teacher catches Denise with her birthday money out of her purse.

After Martha chooses a job, Carolyn is called upon. She announces that she and Leola want the library job. As far as it can be determined from

an examination of previous tapes and field notes, this was the first time that students had formed an "entry" to obtain a job. The teacher paused for a moment, looking back and forth between the job board and the students, and finally accepted this innovation in procedure.

It is important to point out that all the time that Carolyn, Leola, and Denise were playing with their food and money, that had their hands in the air, bidding for jobs. And, this was not simply a passive monitoring of one activity, and an active participation in another. Carolyn especially attended to the flow of teacher-directed discourse, timing the raising and lowering of her hand to coincide with the beginnings and endings of previous bids for the floor, while at the same time, attending to the distribution of money and salty seeds among her friends. That is, they participated in two distinct activities simultaneously; one, the teacher directed allocation of jobs, and two, student-student peer interaction.

Felicia is the next student selected to choose a job. She asks to pass out snacks--and asks to do this with Denise. The teacher asks Denise if that is acceptable to her. When Denise agrees, the teacher assigns a job to a team--for a second time. In getting this job, it seems that Felicia and Denise are trading off the new routine that had just been established by Carolyn and Leola.

This set of exchanges illustrates a recurrent, but often overlooked aspect of classroom interaction--the development of emergent features--ones that are spontaneous, unplanned, and student generated. Importantly, the establishment of this new routine for obtaining jobs is the first evidence in this particular event (but not certainly the only evidence from this classroom) of the students socializing the teacher into patterns of behavior.

The next job to be distributed is monitoring sports equipment at recess. Wallace announces that there is not a jump rope and a ball for the girls (thereby indicating his belief about co-educational sports!). At the same time, Carolyn whispers to Leola that she is going to hang up her sweater. Now, it is important to know that a general rule in this classroom concerns clothes. Basically, the teachers wanted students to confine clothes changing to breaks in between academic activities (recess, lunch). So, it seems that Carolyn is announcing that she is going to break some rules. And, a student

simply walking away from a teacher-led activity would certainly receive reproach from the teacher. Carolyn in fact does go to the clothes closet to change clothes. In the process she brings some more nuts from her purse. And, she carries out this course of action in such a way that she not only doesn't receive (negative) sanction, but she receives compliments for her cooperation from the teacher.

Carolyn accomplishes this artful practice by incorporating the teacher as an unwitting accomplice in her agenda. After whispering her plans to Leola, she announces to the teacher: "I'm gonna go back there." That is an (intentionally? cleverly?) open statement. It doesn't report in so many words Carolyn's intention of going to the closet for the purpose of depositing her sweater. Its ambiguity provides for the possibility that Carolyn is volunteering to help the teacher accomplish an item on her agenda--to be dispatched in much the same way that Jeannie was dispatched by the teacher earlier.

The teacher fills in Carolyn's essentially open statement. She transforms the ambiguous utterance into an instruction to find out about the equipment in the closet: "Alright, Carolyn, go see if there's a jumprope or a girl's ball." (Note that the teacher has incorporated Wallace's sex-linking of equipment--another example of students socializing the teacher).

The sports equipment is kept in a closet right next to the clothes closet, a feature of the classroom environment which facilitates the simultaneous accomplishment of teacher's and student's objectives. Carolyn leaves the circle, giggling (into the microphone, but such that the teacher can't hear), which leads me to believe that she is aware of her manipulation of the situation. After taking off her sweater, she gets some nuts from her purse. She then checks the equipment, and returns to the circle shaking her head "no." The teacher states that there is no need to assign those jobs, thanks Carolyn for her help, and goes on to the next item on her agenda--explaining changes in the day's routine.

Here we have a vivid example of a student who successfully accomplished an item on her agenda, one that had the potential for being seen as a violation of classroom rules. Not only did this student reach her objectives while at the same time contributing to the accomplishment of the teacher's agenda, moreover, she used the teacher's agenda to accomplish her own objectives.

Announcements of Procedures

The next phase of the circle involved a discussion of changes in the day's routine. A considerable amount of time was spent on this activity (N minutes of the total N minutes at the rug). This amount of time may seem unusual for the Spring of the year. But this detail was necessitated by construction on the school site. The school was under renovation during the school year to make the school buildings conform to California earthquake law standards. Modification in lunch schedule, changes in recess sites, even classroom locations were almost a daily occurrence. On this particular day, there were to be two changes in classroom procedure. First, students were going to eat in the classroom (because the cafeteria was closed for construction). Second, recess was to be conducted in a recently completed play area. The team of teachers explained these changes, and fielded a number of questions from the students (including: "where do we put our trash after lunch?" "When do we go home?" "Do we play there everyday?").

All the time that the teacher was answering students' questions, Carolyn and her friends were engaged in a private conversation and eating the food that Carolyn brought back from her trip to the closet. They talked about who would play with whom at recess, and made comparisons of skin color. But their peer-group activity was not carried out independently of their involvement with the teacher-led activity. They asked the teacher questions, they answered questions from the teacher, and they commented on questions from other students. Notably, Carolyn answered a question about trash disposal asked by Everett--who was sitting across the room--while at the same time trying to convince Leola to comb her hair. All of this indicates an ability to monitor and participate in several activities simultaneously, a skill which cognitive scientists have called "parallel processing."

At one point in this phase of the circle, Ysidro addressed a series of questions in Spanish to the teacher about all that had transpired. While both teachers focused their attention on Ysidro, Carolyn and Leola cooperated in a subterfuge that enabled Carolyn to sneak away from the circle and get her comb without detection by the teachers. Carolyn backed away from her place on the edge of the circle, and Leola slipped into the slot she vacated She then raised up on her knees. Since Leola was about 5' 3" tall, she effectively blocked the vision of the teachers, who were involved in

comprehending Ysidro's questions and translating answers to him. This elaborate sneak is a further example of a student action conducted independently of the teacher's concerns.

Upon her return to the circle, Carolyn convinced Denise to take out her birthday money once again. Again, the teacher noticed the transgression, and attempted to take the money from Denise: "Let me take the money and I'll give it back to you." It is interesting to note that Denise is singled out as the culprit; Leola and Carolyn escaped. Then Carolyn interceded. Invoking a version of the "birthday rule" established earlier in the circle when jobs were preferentially distributed to students with birthdays, Carolyn said in a sing-song manner: "She got it for her birthday and you mean to her on her birthday." The teacher relented, tempering her punishment into a warning: "Yeah, but Denise, its going to cause trouble this morning. Now if it comes, if it comes out of your pocket again, I'll take it and give it back to you after school." The teacher continues to chastise the students in this group, saying: "Leola and Denise, there's been much too much talking at the circle." Again, it is important to note that Carolyn escaped specific mention.

Carolyn then pushed the limits: "Not with me, but Denise," to which the teacher responds: "Well, this whole group" (pointing to Carolyn, Denise, and Leola). Carolyn then seems to display some knowledge of Cooley's theory of primary and secondary groups by saying: "it ain't no group, its only three people."

Closing the Circle

After the laughter died down, the teacher moved into the final, closing phase of the circle. She announces the order in which reading groups will work with teachers and explains the work for those who will be working alone.

Summary

The preceding analysis shows some of the procedures that teachers and students use to accomplish objectives in coordination with each other. On this particular day, the teachers had gathered the students on the rug for a number of reasons, including the distribution of classroom jobs among students for the upcoming week, the communication of new lunchtime and recess procedures, and the announcement of the morning's academic schedule.

The teacher employed specific procedures to achieve these objectives. She asked students to bid for the classroom jobs they wanted by employing

the turn allocation procedures outlined above (pages 11-18). She described the new classroom procedures in detail, and then answered questions about them. She announced the rotation pattern for the learning centers.

These immediate agenda items were played out against the teacher's ever present background concern for reasonable order in the group. The teacher maintained this order by having students take turns at talking, bidding for the floor and jobs, by invoking previously established classroom procedures, and by removing a particularly unruly student from the group.

Analysis of the videotape shows that Carolyn (the student with the microphone for the day), also has a course of action to carry out. Her agenda items included building and maintaining social cohesion among her friends and contributing to the teacher's agenda (obtaining a classroom job, and answering the teacher's questions).

Carolyn operated in very methodic ways to accomplish these agenda items. Some of these were done quite independently of the teacher's concerns. She assembled her play group by bribing some of here friends and by excluding others from bidding for the job she wanted. She worked to maintain the loyalty of the group while it was at the rug by sharing food, money, and her comb.

Carolyn accomplished other agenda items while simultaneously contributing to the accomplishment of the teacher's. She traded off the teacher's concern for the distribution of classroom jobs. She convinced Leola to form a team to bid for a job. This strategy enabled Carolyn to display interest in the job distribution items on the teacher's agenda, while at the same time maintaining involvement with her friends. Carolyn also used the teacher's need for information to accomplish her own objectives. While counting the amount of recess equipment in the closet, she changed clothes and got more food for her friends, thereby contributing to the teacher's agenda while accomplishing her own objectives. Carolyn also played with food and money while simultaneously bidding for a job, and monitored teacher-directed conversations while participating in one with Leola and Denise.

Thus, multiple activities exist simultaneously in the classroom. At one time, the teacher engages students in a course of activity, which students gear into. At the same time, the students conduct their own affairs, which sometimes involve the (often unwitting) participation of the teacher.

Conclusions

Interactional Competence in the Classroom

The academic aspects of schooling are well known. It is axiomatic that students must master academic subject matter in school. The skills that students employ to meet these academic demands have been the focus of considerable research. In this paper, I have been describing a social or interactional dimension that accompanies, indeed "frames" (Goffman, 1975) the academic aspects of schooling. The interactional frames around the academic aspects of schooling require students to employ "interactional competence" in order to participate successfully in the classroom community. This competence is interactional in two senses of the term. One, it is the competence that is necessary for effective interaction. Two, it is the competence that is available in the interaction between classroom participants. An interactional sense of competence reduces unwarranted attributions to the psychological states of participants, and to reified sociological abstractions.

Interactional competence has a "communicative" and an "interpretive" component. The communicative aspect of interactional competence in the classroom involved knowing that certain ways of behaving (including talking) are appropriate on some occasions and not on others, knowing "when a context occurs" (Erickson and Shultz, 1977), so that classroom participants can bring their actions into synchrony with the situation and actions of others. Involved here is participating in classroom procedures for taking turns, producing ordered and coherent discourse, and making coherent topical ties.

The interpretive aspect of interactional competence in the classroom concerns classroom rules. The rules and regulations of the classroom community have a special quality, especially as they are made available to students. The criteria used to evaluate students' behavior are seldom stated in so many words. The appropriate means to achieve academic ends are not sent home in notes to parents. The lists of classroom rules that teachers post on bulletin boards are general statements of decorum (e.g., "no running in class," "respect others' property"). Such lists do not tell students how to cope with different rules prescribing behavior for the same situation (e.g., "no running" vs. "leave the room quickly in case of fire").

In short, classroom rules have a "tacit dimension" (Polanyi, 1962; Garfinkel, 1967; Cicourel et al, 1974; Mehan and Wood, 1975). Although seldom formulated in so many words, they form part of an implicit background of social knowledge that students must learn, just as much as they must learn time tables, state capitals, and color words if they are to be successful in the eyes of the teacher and other school officials who are in positions to evaluate student performance.

Competent Participation in the Classroom Community

In the analysis of classroom lessons presented in the first section of this paper, I characterized the competent student as one who integrates academic content and interactional form in teacher directed activities. The corollary of that characterization is that every separation of form and content is a display of incompetence, i.e., every piece of incorrect academic information presented in the proper form represents a lack of academic knowledge, every instance of substantively correct information presented in the inappropriate form indicates a lack of interactional skill.

When the fact that students' have agendas they want to accomplish is incorporated into the analysis, it casts "students' errors" in a new light. Before accepting the conclusion that "students' errors" stem from a lack of competence, it is necessary to determine the part that the behavior in question plays in the students' scheme of things. Not all wrong answers stem from a lack of knowledge, not all disruptions stem from a lack of interactional competence. Borrowing a metaphor from Wittgenstein, students may make mistakes as a move in a different game. Instead of being an incompetent move in a teacher's game, the behavior in question may be a very sophisticated move in a student's game, a move calculated to manipulate the teacher's normative arrangements in order to accomplish items on the student's agenda.

Towards a Mutually Constitutive View of Socialization

This and other research[5] is showing that teachers and students cooperatively contribute to the social organization of the classroom. Teachers engage students and students engage teachers in interaction. Together, they cooperatively assemble classroom events such as "lessons" and "circles." This conception of mutual engagement recognizes that students are active participants in the environments in which they act, not simply passive respondents to them.

This interactional perspective on students' competence in the classroom recommends a revision of prevailing theories of socialization. Existing theories of socialization tend to be one directional. They only focus on the influence that the initiated member of society has on the uninitiated member of the society. They do not give equal consideration to the contribution of the uninitiated participant in the socialization process.

This uni-directional focus is especially prevalent in "cultural transmission" discussions of socialization (Tylor, 1871; Durkheim, 1961). These theories define socialization as the pouring of cultural knowledge from vessels (e.g., children). This unidirectionality is also found in neo-behaviorist theories of socialization which say "the function of education is to transform the human raw material of society into good working members" (Brim, 1966; see also Scott, 1971). This unidirectional orientation is also prevalent in functionalist theories of socialization (e.g., Parsons, 1959; Dreeben, 1968) which define the socialization process as one in which each person is taught the rights and duties associated with statuses in the social order by those who are already in such positions. "Individual personalities are trained to be motivationally and technically adequate to the performance of adult roles" (Parsons; 1959:297).

By saying that "parents socialize children," or "teachers transmit culture to students," these theories say that interaction flows exclusively from the initiated members of society to the uninitiated members of society.[6] In effect, these theories places the "versed vs. the unversed" (Hurn, 1978).

The history of socialization research leaves no doubt that children are influenced by adults. There is a developing literature that describes children's effects on adults (Lewis and Rosenblum 1973; Bell and Harper, 1977). Much of this research describes the infant's contribution to dyadic caregiving interaction. While this research is important because it reverses the traditional polarity of influence between child and adult, it sometimes retains the unidirectional causal influence of previous socialization research. Much of the "child effects adult" research is not truly an interactional theory because it does not ground the organization of behavior in a system of reciprocal causality. In effect, it swings the pendulum from an exclusive concern for the influence of adults on children, to an equally

exclusive concern for the effects of children on adults (or, in extreme cases, reverts to the study of children completely out of the context of adults, e.g., Block, 1978).

These unidirectional formulations about the socialization process ignore the "reflexive" fact (Garfinkel, 1967:1) that participants to interaction, including socializing interaction, mutually influence each other. That is to say, the child, the world, and the adult are in constant interaction; children and adults work together to constitute environments for each other (Mehan and Wood, 1975: 211-21; 229; McDermott and Roth, 1978).

And, this mutual influence occurs simultaneously, not autonomously. One participant to interaction does not influence a second at one time, while the second influences the first at some other time. Participants to interaction influence each other at the same time:

> Most of the existing studies appear to limit themselves mainly to the effects of person A on person B without taking equally into account that whatever B does influences A's next move and that they are both largely influenced by and in turn influence the context in which their action takes place (Watzlawick et al, 1967:35).

Thus, a teacher teaches a child, while the child teaches the teacher. Or, in more general terms, children structure and modify their environment (including adults) just as they are structured and modified by it (Richards, 1974:1).

Footnotes

1. This group might take umbrage at the distinction between socio-linguistics and linguistics, arguing that linguistics is the study of language in its social context.

2. Bernbaum (1977) and Woods and Hammersly (1977).

3. See especially: Philips (1972; 1976); Bremme and Erickson (1976); Erickson and Shultz (1977); Florio (1978); McDermott et al (1978); Gumperz and Herasimchuk (1975).

4. The "learning centers" arrangement also facilitated the introduction of a more controlled ethnographic technique, which we called an "instruction chain." During the final moments of "choosing time," one of the teachers called the "target student" (the student with the wireless microphone for that day) aside. She asked the target student to give instructions to the work group. After the teacher gave the target student instructions and listened to the target student's formulation of instructions, all the students were assembled on the rug in the usual manner. The teacher assigned tasks for the remainder of the morning to all but one work group in the usual manner. She announced that one student in the remaining group (our "target student") had their instructions. We videotaped the teacher with the target student, the target student with the work group, and the teacher's evaluation of the students' work after the task was completed. This "instruction chain" enables us to compare the teacher's formulation of instructions to the target student with the target student's formulation of instruction to the teacher and to the work group. (See Mehan (1977); Cazden et al (1978); Carrasco et al (1979).

5. See studies in Footnote #3.

6. Willis (1969) provides a parallel analysis in a different research context. He says that enculturation studies were only concerned with the impact of white culture on colored peoples; "the transmission of culture from colored people to white people was largely ignored, especially when studying North American Indians." Willis (1969:138).

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THE COMPETENT STUDENT:

Relevance Statement

According to Hugh Mehan, who has carried out considerable and very detailed research in classrooms, student competence involves not just academic content, but interactional behavior as well. Students must know how to display what they know in appropriate ways. Interactional competence involves such matters as turn-taking, producing ordered and coherent discourse, and making coherent topical ties.

Mehan discusses two types of competence required of students: 1) the integration of academic content and interactional form and 2) the integration of teacher and student agendas. He discusses what happens when students' display of academic content is not integrated with appropriate interactional form. Lack of integration unravels the fabric of social interaction in the classroom and can lead to negative evaluations of students by teachers. According to Mehan, classrooms are like communities, with social organizations and social activities. Students and teachers come to the classroom with different agendas--objectives and programs they would like to see met. Students and teachers coordinate procedures to accomplish their respective objectives. As a result, multiple activities exist simultaneously in the classroom. Mehan uses video-taped material to analyze such activities in detail.

Mehan argues for the importance of recognizing the existence of interactional competence as part of the implicit, tacit background of social knowledge students must learn, just as they must learn academic knowledge, like state capitals. Interactional competence is often important in teachers' and others' evaluation of student performance. Mehan concludes with a critique of prevailing theories of socialization, arguing that socialization is a two-way street. Not only do adults influence children, but children simultaneously influence adults. Students as well as teachers are active participants in classroom environment and social organization.